



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10**

1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, WA 98101-3140

OFFICE OF
ECOSYSTEMS, TRIBAL AND
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

August 10, 2011

Mr. John Witmer
Federal Transit Administration
Jackson Federal Building, Suite 3142
915 2nd Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98174

Re: East Link Light Rail Project Final Environmental Impact Statement
EPA Region 10 Project Number 06-052-FTA

Dear Mr. Witmer:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the East Link Light Rail Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). We are submitting comments in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. We appreciate this opportunity to participate.

Our January 7, 2011 comments on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) indicated that we have no substantial environmental concerns regarding the new alternatives and design modifications. We did, however, describe several issues that would benefit from more information in the FEIS.

One of our key recommendations was to compare the ridership, land use effects, and transportation efficiencies of constructing light rail, commuter rail, and a trail in the BNSF Right-of-Way vs. constructing light rail in the Bellevue Way corridor. We recognize that such an analysis may be challenging, yet believe that it could be useful--particularly from a long-term regional transit planning perspective. If such an analysis were conducted, it is reasonable to expect that any potential long-term ridership, land use benefits, and transportation efficiencies associated with a BNSF Railway corridor alternative would need to be substantial in order to off-set relatively higher business and employee displacement, noise, wetland, habitat, and cost per rider impacts.

If you have questions or would like to discuss our comments, please contact Elaine Somers of my staff at (206) 553-2966 or by electronic mail at somers.elaine@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christine B. Reichgott".

Christine B. Reichgott, Manager
Environmental Review and Sediment Management Unit